

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

A STUDY.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS HALL.

RIGHT OF TRANSLATION RESERVED.

LIVERPOOL :

McKOWEN & FINGLASS, MIDDLETON BUILDINGS, 1, RUMFORD STREET.

1865.

GENTLEMEN,

The subject I have selected for my paper this evening, is the Life and Character of the late President of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln. I have done so, because it is not yet five months since he was the great moving Spirit in that terrible drama there, which so agitated the world, and on which the curtain has not yet fallen. I have done so also, because, in my humble opinion, his merits are not known in this country, and much undervalued, by the large majority, at all events. My endeavour has been, to analyse his life and character, so as to form some estimate of his true worth.

Liverpool, 8th Sept. 1865.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN was born on the 12th February, 1809, in the State of Kentucky. Those who place faith in pedigree, in being the descendants of a good stock, will be disappointed to learn, that the only trunk which can be traced for the American President's family tree, is his grandfather, after whom he was named, who was a very poor backwoodsman in Kentucky, and who was murdered and scalped by the native Indians there, not far from the miserable log cabin which he occupied, sometime about the year 1780. Thomas Lincoln, the father of the subject of this essay, was this unfortunate man's younger son, and was a mere infant when his father was murdered. He grew up without any education whatever, being employed about a farm from a very early age. In 1806, he married Nancy Hanks, who was mother of Abraham Lincoln. Thomas Lincoln and his wife belonged to the despised class, styled in Kentucky, "the poor whites," but Mrs. Lincoln was a superior woman of her class. She could not write, but she had the advantage of her husband, in being able to read: we find that they attended a Baptist Chapel; that Mrs. Lincoln was noted for piety, and was much respected by her neighbours. She was very desirous that her children should have some education, and when only seven years of age, Abraham was sent to a country school, in the neighbourhood. His school-days here, however, came to a very early close, his father, with all his household, having emigrated to the free State of Indiana, in the Autumn of 1816, a very few months after he had been sent to school.

Thomas Lincoln found his position, as "a poor white," becoming too uncomfortable, as the Planters in Kentucky grew rapidly in wealth, and increased the numbers of slaves on their plantations. We learn his mode of life from the description

of their new home, which little Abraham assisted his father to build, mere child as he then was. It was a simple log hut, eighteen feet square, one room forming the entire dwelling; but some planks were laid across the rough joists overhead, making a sort of rickety loft, in which a small bed was fitted up for Abraham, and to which he ascended, at nights, by a ladder, for a good many years. Truly, this is a very humble origin—born of poor and uneducated parents—despised, even among a slave population, where his childhood was passed, and his boyhood spent in a similar state of poverty, in a rude, uncultivated country, where the only neighbours he could come in contact with were adventurous settlers, similar to themselves, and thinly scattered. It would be difficult to find a more humble origin than this.

Mrs. Lincoln had three children; a daughter, who was older than Abraham, and two sons, one of whom died, however, in infancy, so that Abraham was her only boy, and the special object of her care. She became still more desirous that he should be educated; but there was either no school near their new home, or they could not now afford the expense of sending him to school, so she, herself, endeavoured to continue the lessons he had commenced before leaving Kentucky, and Abraham being a very apt, diligent boy, she had succeeded in teaching him to put his letters together, and to read, by the time he was nine years of age. She had just accomplished this, when she died, in the autumn of 1818. Abraham felt the loss of his excellent mother very deeply, and never alluded to her, in his after-life, but in terms of the strongest affection and regard.

After the death of his mother, the boy displayed a strong love of reading, and devoured every book he could lay his hands upon. His desire for self-improvement was extraordinary; within a year after his mother's death he conceived the idea of learning to write, and, without assistance from any teacher, he proceeded to teach himself, collecting scraps of writing wherever he could pick

them up, and working away with a piece of chalk, or the charred end of a stick, to imitate the letters, on any smooth surface he could find; and, in this manner, alone and unassisted, he had actually taught himself to write, before he was thirteen years of age. I have pictured to myself the little fellow, picking up his scraps of torn letters, and collecting his copies for imitation, in many different ways, and getting them deciphered by some kind neighbour who might be so far educated as to be able to do so, then scratching away, alone and unobserved, in some quiet corner; and in my entire study of this man's life and character, there is no portion of it on which I have dwelt with so much pleasure, as upon the young boy working out his first great conception; for, at his age, and in his situation, it was indeed a great conception, and a wonderful achievement to have accomplished it. This is the first view that breaks upon us of the character of Abraham Lincoln, and it does so at a very early stage of his life. Let us hope that ripening years will only expand and mature, and that no disease nor withering blight may destroy or dry up, the promising fruit.

About a year after his mother's death, his father married Mrs. Sally Johnson, a widow, with three children, and of the same social status as himself. This appears to have had little or no influence upon Abraham's life. He seems to have got on harmoniously enough with his new relatives, but they assisted in no way his studies or efforts at self-improvement: they had little or no education, and had no taste whatever for reading or literature. When in his twelfth year, however, his father sent him again to school, in the neighbourhood, for a few months, where he was taught arithmetic, as far as the Rule of Three, and this completed the entire education, at school, which he ever received. He used frequently to say, when President of the United States, "that one year would embrace the whole teaching, by schoolmaster, he ever had in his life."

Between the age of thirteen and twenty-one, there is little to mark his life. He was a tall, strapping lad, and at thirteen he had to do something towards the support of his father's house. There was little choice of employment for him where they dwelt, and that of a woodman, cutting down trees, and splitting rails, was the hardy occupation in which those years of his life were passed. He was expert also at the use of the rifle, and with it he added something to the stock of the family larder. Thus, the years during which he passed from boyhood into manhood were spent in the most healthful, strengthening, and invigorating employment in which he could have been occupied, and formed that hard, wiry, muscular frame, for which he was remarkable in after-life. Now, we are told in one of the biographic sketches of his life which I have seen, that during those years, he spent his evenings after labour, in reading and study; but reflective readers will naturally say:—"Well, situated and occupied as he was, what are all the reading and study he can have done—his dwelling a log cabin eighteen feet square, with a rickety loft as a bedchamber, in which lived his father, sister and stepmother, with two or three of her children, besides himself—in an outlandish sort of country, and with few neighbours, most of whom must have been as poor and as ignorant as themselves, how could a lad obtain books, or the opportunity for reading or study, of any consequence whatever? and that, too, when he must have returned each evening fagged and ready for rest, to this miserable home, after his hard day's labour." This is the first view which naturally occurs to us, and we place little faith in any general statement "that he spent those evenings in reading and study." But, improbable or even impossible as it may appear, there is one little anecdote told of him, during this period, when he was about sixteen or seventeen years of age, and confirmed by himself, when President, and a circumstance which occurred in 1832, when he was about twenty-three years of age, which, together, cast a great light back over those eight years of his life,

and prove, in the clearest and most satisfactory manner, that in spite of all those apparently insurmountable difficulties, he must have read, and cultivated his mind in no ordinary manner, during that period. When about sixteen or seventeen years of age, and employed as I have mentioned, cutting down trees, and splitting rails, he had borrowed from a Mr. Crawford (a person in better circumstances than his father, for whom he had worked occasionally,) a copy of the "Life of Washington," which he carried home with him, and commenced to read with great avidity on the evening he received it. Next morning, he placed it carefully in a corner, near the top of his bed, in the rickety loft I have previously described to you, but that day it rained heavily, and when he returned from his work, in the evening, and proceeded to his corner to have his second feast, he found, to his dismay, that the rain had penetrated the leaky roof, and that his borrowed book was saturated with water, and much injured. What was he to do? He had no money with which to purchase another copy of the book, but he went straight to Mr. Crawford, told him bluntly what had occurred, and said:—"I have no money with which to buy another copy of the book, but I shall work to you for the money, as I must restore it in as good order as I received it, or return you its value." So, Mr. Crawford fixed its value at three days' labour, and Abraham worked those three days for Mr. Crawford, and the damaged copy of "Washington" became his. What an eager searching after knowledge does this little anecdote betray; what a simple, sterling, straightforward honesty of heart does it shew! The next circumstance sheds a very powerful flood of light upon the knowledge and acquirements he must have gained during those eight years. In March, 1830, his father moved from Indiana to the richer and more thriving State of Illinois, taking Abraham and all his family along with him. Abraham obtained employment from a man of the name of Offult, in a flat boat, which made trips to New Orleans, being loaded with stores, which were sold at the plantations on the

Mississippi. In July, 1831, this same Offult, having conceived a strong liking for Abraham, placed him in charge of a shop and mill at New Salem, a little thriving town of Illinois; and the circumstance I have to relate to you is this:—Early in 1832 a war, called the Black Hawk War, broke out, and the citizens of New Salem formed a volunteer company to assist in putting it down. Abraham Lincoln joined this company, and, to his astonishment, his comrades elected him their captain, without his having the slightest knowledge or expectation of their intention to do so. Nor was this all: on his return from a very short campaign with his company, he was still more surprised, to be waited upon by a deputation of the citizens of New Salem, who proposed to nominate him as a candidate for the Legislature of Illinois, at the election, then about to take place; and he was nominated, and although he was not elected at this time, a large number of votes were recorded for him. Now, let us pause here for a short space, and consider this. Here is a young man, barely twenty-three years of age, and who has only resided in this New Salem for about nine months, elected captain of their company of volunteers, and that too, by the voice of the members, without his own knowledge; and, during a short absence with his company, lo! a large body of the citizens of New Salem select this young stranger as a fit and proper person to be their representative in the Legislature of their State. What is this New Salem? It is a thriving, little town, in one of the most prosperous States in the American Union, and its inhabitants are a sharp, intelligent, enterprising people. Can this stranger, who has so rapidly impressed them with such a high opinion of his abilities, that they heap these honours upon him, be a raw, uneducated, uninformed lad, from the backwoods of Indiana? It would be absurd to imagine such a case. And yet, this stranger is Abraham Lincoln, and he is utterly alone, with nothing whatever to recommend him: he has no friends, no money; he is only a servant, keeping a shop, and looking after

a small mill for his master. How, then, can he have so impressed this people? There is one talisman only which can have been in his possession, and that talisman he must have possessed, however he obtained it—the talisman of acquired and cultivated knowledge, and the easy power of wielding it. I know not what books he read, or what mode of study he adopted in the backwoods and wretched log cabin of Indiana; but here, we have before us, at the age of twenty-three, a young man of such high attainments, that he at once commands the respect and honour, not merely of his compeers in years, but of his seniors, in a strange, populous, and active place, to such a degree, that they select him as a fit and proper person for high and most responsible honours. As certain, therefore, as I know, that the student who wins the honours of wrangler at Cambridge, must have pored with earnest brain over his studies, do I feel satisfied that Abraham Lincoln must have read hard, and studied hard, by lamp or such light as he could procure, during those eight years of his life in the backwoods of Indiana. I think we may consider, that the green fruit we looked at with so much pleasure, is still sound and healthy, and that it is ripening according to promise.

As I have said, the canvas for him at this period was unsuccessful, but a large number of votes were recorded for him, and it was at this time he acquired the surname of “Honest Abe,” a surname which he retained during the remainder of his life. Now, although we may at the first glance be disposed to smile at this homely title, I doubt if, upon second thoughts—when we consider the man, and when we consider that it was first conferred by those who dealt with him in business, and that from this centre it gradually extended its range until it was confirmed by the voice of the American nation—I say, that I doubt if we shall not regard it as one of the noblest titles which the American nation could have conferred upon him.

It was shortly after this period that he formed another extraordinary resolution, for one in his circumstances—a resolution to study law, and become a lawyer. He had opened a shop upon his own account, but the business was not congenial to his tastes; and, having little or no capital, his honest ideas would not allow him to attempt to carry on business excepting on a very small scale. So, at his leisure hours, he proceeded, alone and unassisted, precisely upon the same principle as he had taught himself to write, to teach himself law—he borrowed several legal books, and commenced to read. He found, however, that he could not hope, for years, to acquire a sufficient knowledge of law to enable him to practice; and, as the profits of his shop were very small, he tried another mode of making a livelihood. He had formed the acquaintance of a Mr. John Calhoun, who gave him some lessons in surveying, and he commenced practice as surveyor upon his own account, about the beginning of 1834. In this he was very successful, and was fully employed, and worked very hard; but he still found time to prosecute his legal studies, and we shall soon see the best of all proofs of the labour and the devotion with which he must have worked at those studies.

In the August of this year, 1834, he was again brought forward as a candidate for the Legislature of Illinois, two years after his first nomination, and this time his election was carried by a large majority. Thus his political life commenced in the twenty-fifth year of his age, and it is unnecessary for me here to say more regarding his success as a member of the Illinois Legislature, than simply to mention that in 1836, 1838, and 1840, he was re-elected and returned by very large majorities, sufficient proofs that he was esteemed a valuable representative by the people.

We now arrive at the next great step in his career. In 1836 he obtained a law licence; he has attended no college lectures, no lawyer's office; alone and unassisted, and with his time

amply occupied, as we have seen, has he read and studied law during the last four years only, and yet he has obtained a law licence. Did ever young lawyer, with every advantage, and with his whole time devoted to his studies, pass in shorter time? "It is absurd," we exclaim; "this fellow's knowledge of law must be mere surface, it can have no depth, it is presumption in him to attempt practice." But what do we find? In April, 1837, the Hon. John T. Stuart, a lawyer in the first practice in Springfield, the Capital of Illinois, has assumed Abraham Lincoln as his partner, and he has removed to Springfield, and his name there, as a rising lawyer, is already high. This speaks for itself; and I shall not expatiate upon it, the limits of my paper will not permit me to do so, but the ripe fruit is now before us, and its qualities do not require to be pointed out or enlarged upon.

I have now traced the life of Abraham Lincoln from childhood to his twenty-eighth year. Born in a very low grade of the white population in America, with no forefathers' name to stimulate his ambition, brought up from childhood to manhood in one of the poorest, rudest, and least cultivated States of the Union, and in one of the dreariest of homesteads, among poor and ignorant relatives, without friends, without influence, without advantage of any kind. And what do we find him now in his twenty-eighth year? We find him "Honest Abe," member of the Legislature of Illinois, twice returned, a lawyer of rising reputation, and partner of the Hon. John T. Stuart, of Springfield.

I shall pass over the next twenty-four years of his life with a rapid glance. He has attained a position purely by his own unassisted abilities, strength of purpose, and force of character, in which the powers he possesses, will steadily and rapidly tell their own tale—and that tale was simply told during those twenty-four years. He is now fifty-two years of age—he has risen to the top of the ladder in his profession, and has realized a fortune—he has risen to the top of the ladder as a politician,

and is acknowledged leader of the largest party in the State—he has risen to the top of the ladder in his Nation—he is elected President of the United States of America—and he still retains his title of Honest Abe, a title now a household word.

Before proceeding, however, to consider Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States, it is necessary to devote a short space to the question of slavery, and to the cause of the secession of the Slave States from the Union, as there is much misconception regarding these questions in this country. I have to confess myself that I was very strongly prejudiced against Abraham Lincoln and his government, when I commenced the study of his life, purely from an utter misconception of these questions as they existed in America, and I believe my views were the general popular belief in England. I shall endeavour as briefly as possible to explain these questions. Everybody knows that the United States consists of a union of distinct and separate States, each of which sends its representatives to Congress; and that, previous to the late disruption, most of the Southern States were Slave States, or States in which slavery existed as an institution, while the States in the North were Free States, or States in which slavery was not an institution. But it is not so universally known, in this country, that every separate State has a distinct government or legislature of its own, which manages its own internal government, and originates all laws that regulate its domestic affairs; and that Congress has no power to interfere with the domestic laws of any State—it has only the power to veto any act before it is passed. A law, therefore, once passed in any State, and having received the sanction of the President or the Governor appointed by him for that particular State, Congress is powerless to interfere with it; and, consequently, according to the Constitution of the United States, neither the President nor Congress can interfere with the institution of slavery in any State in which it may exist as an institution. But

if any State should attempt to extend the institution of slavery, or to increase the powers of the slave owner, they have the power to veto any such act. I may also state here that to the west of the present States exists a vast territory, peopled only by wandering tribes of Indians, and that large tracts of this territory are admirably adapted for being converted into sugar, tobacco, or cotton plantations, and this territory belongs to the United States Government. Now, there was no doubt a very considerable party of Abolitionists, who believed slavery to be a great national sin, and that it ought to be abolished from the institutions of the country; but the two great parties who divided the States were the Democrats and the Republicans. The Democrats were principally slave owners in the Southern States, and those interested commercially with them, and they maintained that the slaves were their property, in the same way as their horses or cattle, and that they were entitled to take their slaves with them wherever they chose, and to use them for doing the labour they were fitted for, in the very same manner as they might take their horses or cattle along with them and apply them for their labour. In short, their effort was to extend and increase the powers of the slave owner. The Republicans were opposed to slavery on the same principles as the Abolitionists, but they supported the laws and the constitution of the United States, and they would not permit any interference with these; in other words, they would allow no unconstitutional act to be committed. Their reply to the Democrats therefore was, "You may use your slaves within your own States according to the laws of your own States—we have no right to interfere with that; but you shall not bring your slaves as your horses or your cattle into our States, neither shall you take them into any portion of the western territories, and open out slave plantations or form new Slave States there; neither shall you increase the powers of the slave owner, if it is in our power to veto such a proceeding."

And Abraham Lincoln was the leader of the Republican party when he was elected President, and there is no doubt that the Southern States, who had returned the President from their own class for many years, dreaded the growth of this Republican party, and feared its able leader, now elected President. They heard the cry, that slavery was a national sin, echoed from all sides, but they were born and brought up with slaves for servants, and their eyes were not opened to the crime of the institution—while they saw ruin to their plantations, and no hope of opening up new and profitable plantations in the territories, in this growing feeling of horror at slavery. True, Abraham Lincoln and his party said—“we shall not interfere with the institution of slavery as it exists in your own States, we have no right or power to do so, you may hold on by that as long as you choose;” but they said at the same time, “you are committing a most heinous moral crime, and we shall veto any attempt on your part to increase the slave owners’ powers; and we think it is only a question of time with your own consciences when you will yourselves emancipate your slaves.” The Democrats, therefore believed that their only safety lay in forming an exclusive union among themselves, and the election of this Republican leader was the signal for their secession. In proof of the views which I have just stated, I shall read to you, in the first place, a protest which Abraham Lincoln and a Mr. Daniel Stone, when members of the legislature of Illinois, forwarded to Congress, and which was read to the house on the 3rd March, 1837:—

“Resolutions on the subject of domestic slavery having passed both houses of the General Assembly at its present Session, the undersigned hereby protest against the passage of the same.

“They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends to increase rather than abate its evils.

“ They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power under the constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different States.

“ They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power under the constitution to abolish slavery in the district of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised unless at the request of the people of said district.

“ The difference between these opinions and those contained in the said resolutions is their reason for entering this protest.”

“ Signed, DANIEL STONE,
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.”

Now, this protest contains the precise sentiments and principles advocated by Abraham Lincoln from that date until he issued his great emancipation proclamation in 1862, that being then a legal penalty to which the Secessionists had exposed themselves, besides being a measure towards subduing the rebellion. I might give innumerable quotations, both from his speeches and letters over those twenty-five years, in proof and illustration of this, but that would be tedious; and I therefore merely state that such is the fact, and that these sentiments and principles will be found embodied in the resolutions adopted by the Republican party at their convention, held at Chicago in 1860, Abraham Lincoln being the acknowledged leader of that party at that date. The following quotation will also prove to you what was the cause of the Southern secession:—The delegates of the State of Alabama (one of the seceding States) held a convention on the 11th January, 1861, and passed an ordinance which commences with the following clause—‘Whereas the election of Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin to the offices of President and Vice-President of the United States of America, by a sectional party avowedly hostile to the domestic institutions, and to the peace and security of the people of the State of Alabama, preceded by many and dangerous infractions of the constitution of the United States by many of the States

and people of the northern section, is a political wrong of so insulting and menacing a character as to justify the people of the State of Alabama in the adoption of prompt and decided measures for their future peace and security: Therefore be it declared and ordained by the people of the State of Alabama, in convention assembled, that the State of Alabama now withdraws, and is hereby withdrawn, from the Union known as the United States of America, &c.'"

That declaration contains the grounds upon which all the other States seceded, so that it is unnecessary for me to give any further quotations in proof of the cause of their secession.

Now, the sectional party referred to is the Republican party, and their whole avowed hostility to the domestic institutions of the Union is contained in Abraham Lincoln's and Daniel Stone's protest, which I have just read to you.

I shall not fatigue you further with discussing this point, but I trust I have made myself somewhat clear upon it, as it is of the utmost consequence in considering the character of Abraham Lincoln. Truth, sterling honesty, and uprightness form the bulwarks of his massive character, and if these can be torn away the hulk would be sadly damaged. He has been charged, in this country, with making slavery a stalking-horse to gain the sympathies of England, while that question was a pure sham upon his part, as he had no desire to interfere with slavery, and his own words are quoted in proof of this. Now, I trust I have made it clear to you that slavery was the root of the whole difference which occasioned the Southern secession; and that the principles advocated by Abraham Lincoln, with regard to slavery, were never changed by him from the commencement of his political career until he issued his great emancipation proclamation. I consider him one of the most consistent politicians to be met with in history, as I have been unable to find the slightest change, or disposition to waver, in his whole political life.

The first six States to secede were South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas; and the delegates from these seceded States held their first convention at Montgomery on the 4th February, 1861, and on the 18th of that month they inaugurated Jefferson Davis president, and Alexander H. Stephens vice-president of their confederacy.

Abraham Lincoln did not leave Springfield, on his route for Washington, to enter upon his presidency, till the 11th February, 1861. There are reports that several attempts were made to assassinate him on his journey, but of these I shall take no notice. He arrived in Washington somewhat unexpectedly on the morning of Saturday, the 23rd February, and, along with Mr. Seward, he waited upon Mr. Buchanan, the ex-president, that same forenoon at the White House. On the 4th March he was duly inaugurated, and delivered his inaugural address.

Thus, Abraham Lincoln is now seated in his Presidential Chair—in other words he is Ruler of one of the greatest nations in the world.

When this news first reached us here, the suggestion which occurred to most, was, how will he fill this very elevated seat? Those acquainted with his origin no doubt thought—"this low-born man, brought up in a sort of half savage state, who has had only the very rudest elements of education, and who is a purely self-made man; his breeding will show itself now; he will be utterly out of place, his head will be turned; he will be quite giddy; he will be like a beggar upon horseback." I shall endeavour to make him draw his own picture, in other words, to photograph him for you, seating himself in his saddle, and gathering up the reins.—He is leaving Springfield, his home, the town in which his great battle of life has been fought during the last twenty-five years; he is bidding his fellow townsmen goodbye. I give you the words in which he closes his address. "My friends, no one but one in my position, can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting. To this people I owe all that I

am. Here I have lived more than a quarter of a century; here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried. I know not how soon I shall see you again. A duty devolves upon me which is perhaps greater than that which has devolved upon any other man, since the days of Washington. He never would have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon whom he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine aid which sustained him, and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support; and I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that Divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain. Again, I bid you all an affectionate farewell."

The next view completes the picture: he is now being inaugurated President of the United States, and is the centre of an imposing assembly: he opens his inaugural address in the following words:—"Fellow citizens of the United States, in compliance with a custom as old as the Government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take, in your presence, the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States, to be taken by the President, before he enters on the execution of his office.

"I do not consider it necessary at present to discuss those matters of administration, about which there is no special anxiety or excitement.

"Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States, that by the accession of a Republican administration, their property, and their peace, and their personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed, and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of these speeches, when I declare, that I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of

slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this, and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them." And he closes this admirable address as follows:—"In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one, to preserve, protect, and defend it.

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends—we must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

This completes the picture; and I would ask, does it not present to you that tall, gaunt, but powerful figure, settling like a rock into his seat, while his long, bony, sinewy fingers, close upon the reins with the grip of a giant. True, that figure is not of fashionable mould, and those fingers are not small and white and tapering, but where shall a painter find a nobler subject for his study than Abraham Lincoln assuming the reins of the American Government—not the shadow of pride or vain-glory in his whole bearing—but the simple, brave, strong man, girding up his loins for a huge task, and breathing from the bottom of his big heart a prayer to the Almighty for guidance and strength. And it is a huge task that lies before him, to rule the great Republic of America, whose population is largely composed of the needy, the adventurous, the enterprising from all parts; a population the most active and restless in the world, and a large, powerful and wealthy section of that popu-

lution rising in rebellion against his Government. Has he a large well-organised army at his command to enforce his authority? No! all the troops that form the standing army of the Government are a mere handful, and the best officers of that army have joined the rebellion. This is an appalling prospect even to the strongest and the most experienced, and surely Abraham Lincoln must quail at heart, whatever outward calmness he may maintain. Let us see how he acts.—Does he try to intimidate the Secessionists by energy and vigour? Does he proceed instantly to collect and organize a large army, and does he issue threatening proclamations against those engaged in the insurrectionary movements? No! he does nothing whatever—he has reasoned with them, and his logic is clear and convincing—he has besought them with great depth of feeling in his inaugural address not to destroy the Constitution of their country, and calmly, without one effort which could be construed into a threat of coercive measures, does he await the result, refusing to recognise the rebellion until they actually attack the Government Authorities by force of arms. On the 12th of March, 1861, two Commissioners from the Southern Confederacy appeared at Washington, and applied for an interview with the Secretary of State, for the purpose of negotiating “an adjustment of all questions between the two Governments.” This Mr. Lincoln simply declined, on the ground that “it could not be admitted that the States referred to had, in law or fact, withdrawn from the Federal Union.” And this is the whole notice that he takes of the Secession Congress. Well, certainly this is dignified enough, and there is no apparent quailing or uneasiness here. No monarch, with the most powerful army and the most loyal people under his sway, could treat a trifling outbreak in the borders of his dominions with more confident unconcern. But surely there is a want of energy here, or of right appreciation of the seriousness of the crisis. Affairs roll on, and on

the 12th April, the Confederate leaders strike their first blow. Their army at Charleston, under the command of General Beauregard, has demanded the surrender of Fort Sumpter, and that being refused, General Beauregard has opened fire upon the Fort. Major Anderson, then in command of the battery for the Government, being unable to hold it against this army with his mere handful of men, surrendered, and evacuated it on Sunday morning, the 14th April. On the following day, the 15th, was issued Abraham Lincoln's first call for 75,000 men, to suppress the rebellion, and the proclamation was received throughout the loyal States with unbounded enthusiasm. It seems, therefore, that inactive as he may appear perhaps to have been during the first month of his Presidency, there must have been an under current of strong judgment and energy to inspire his supporters on the spot with such confidence in their leader, as the call could not have been responded to with greater alacrity and enthusiasm. I quote a short extract from his message to Congress upon this occasion:—"The policy chosen looked to the exhaustion of all peaceful measures before a resort to any stronger ones—everything was forborne, without which it was believed possible to keep Government on foot.

"By the affair of Fort Sumpter, with its surrounding circumstances, that point was reached; then and thereby the assailants of Government began the conflict of arms, without a gun in sight or in expectancy to return their fire, save only the few in the fort, sent to that harbour years before for their own protection, and still ready to give that protection in whatever was lawful. In this act, discarding all else, they have forced upon the country the distinct issue—immediate dissolution or blood"

I shall now pass very rapidly over the conflict which followed, and which deluged America with blood during the ensuing four years. And I shall take no notice of the numerous defeats which the Northern army suffered during the first

two years of the struggle, and of the changes which were made in the generals commanding that army. It is simply ridiculous to expect, that a vast army, with its generals and officers, can be collected, trained, and organised out of a motley mob of raw recruits, and anything brilliant, as a campaign, executed by them, within two years. Bulls Runs, mistakes, and messes are only to be expected from such an army during so short an apprenticeship, and the detail of them in no way affects the inquiry we are engaged upon. But I must ask you to look upon Abraham Lincoln during those two years: there does he sit in his presidential chair, calm, unshaken, resolute, studying his lesson with the same patient, earnest, care, and indomitable strength of purpose, which he displayed when he taught himself to write at eleven years of age. He has to subdue those rebellious states and restore the Union—that is his duty; he has bound himself by oath to do so, and it shall be done.

During this very trying period also, I must call your attention to a circumstance which, although it does not affect the events in any way, bears upon the character which we are now endeavouring to study. The tone of public feeling in England was strongly opposed to Abraham Lincoln and his government, and very much in favour of the Southern cause, and the leading articles of *The Times* were a true reflex of this feeling. As I have said, I believe that this feeling arose from an utter misapprehension of the true cause of the secession, and from an impression that Abraham Lincoln was a sort of lucky adventurer, who had raised himself from nothing, and who was not over scrupulous, as such adventurers usually are. I am persuaded that if the true state of affairs had been generally known in England, every Englishman would have been in favour of Abraham Lincoln and the North. However, I can imagine nothing more galling than those *Times'* leading articles to a man in Abraham Lincoln's situation. They condemned his whole course of action; they laughed with their cutting

satire at every defeat which the Northern arms received; they predicted a hopeless war, and certain ultimate defeat, and they advised the wise and just course for him to adopt. Now surely he must have felt irritated, and must have made some bitter observations when he read those articles, as the mails from England arrived. I have been unable to find one angry retort or remark which escaped his lips regarding England. On the contrary, he read and listened to all this with his quiet, big smile, and any remarks he ever made upon the subject were in his playful, thoughtful, pleasant way.

The war has now lasted about eighteen months; his armies have suffered many defeats and repulses, yet they are gathering strength, and are steadily exhausting and narrowing the field of the Southern Confederacy. Nothing can be more resolute than his course of action, but he still holds out the olive branch to the rebellious States—"Only return to the Union," he says, "and the constitution shall be as it was. I shall not interfere with the domestic institutions of one of your States, or attempt to free any of your slaves." His letter to Horace Greeley, which appeared in all the Northern papers, and which caused so much noise here, may be regarded as one of his last proclamations to this effect. I shall read this letter in full, as it is one of Abraham Lincoln's most characteristic letters. Horace Greeley was an old friend, but having different political views, he had written a letter, making a rather furious attack upon Abraham Lincoln and his government. This is the reply:—

"WASHINGTON, 22nd August, 1862.

"DEAR SIR,—I have just read yours of the 19th instant, addressed to myself through the *New York Tribune*.

"If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact, which I may know to be erroneous, I do not now and here controvert them.

"If there be any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not now and here argue against them.

“ If there be perceptible in it, an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it, in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

“ As to the policy ‘ I seem to be pursuing,’ as you say, I have not mean’t to leave any one in doubt.

“ I would save the Union—I would save it in the shortest way, under the Constitution.

“ The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be,—the Union as it was.

“ If there be those who would not save the Union, unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them.

“ If there be those who would not save the Union, unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them.

“ My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery.

“ If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it ; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it ; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.

“ What I do about slavery and the coloured race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union ; and what I forbear, I forbear, because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.

“ I shall do less, whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause ; and shall do more, whenever I believe doing more will help the cause.

“ I shall try to correct errors, when shewn to be errors, and I shall adopt new views, so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

“ I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty, and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish—that all men everywhere could be free.

“ Yours, A. LINCOLN.”

This remarkable letter is a study in itself, and reveals the whole character of the man. You will observe its perfect consistency, and how it contains the same sentiments as were expressed in his protest in 1837; but it shows also, the truly great soul—the clear head, and strong judgment—and the resolute upright man in performing his duty.

He has now held out the olive branch long enough, and it is still spurned, so he adopts the course for which he says he is prepared, in his letter to Horace Greeley; he makes his first threat with regard to slavery, on the 22nd September, 1862; he issues a Proclamation, declaring that he will recommend to Congress, a measure, by which “on and after the 1st January 1863, all slaves in rebellious States at that date, shall for ever be free.” There is no haste here, the same calm dignified confidence which regulates all his acts, characterises this—he gives them three months’ notice of his intentions, that they may weigh well what they are about. This proclamation tells them in the most forcible, but dignified language, “I have fought with you for a year and a half—I have endeavoured to shew you that your struggle to break up and destroy the Union and its Constitution, is vain and hopeless, and to persuade you to return to the Union, and that the Constitution should remain unaltered.—I still hold out the same conditions to you; but three months’ longer resistance, and they shall be withdrawn.—Your slaves shall be confiscated, in other words, free’d, and you shall be put down with a strong hand.” But they are not to be persuaded,—the three months expire; and on the 1st January, 1863, the great Emancipation Proclamation is issued. From this date, the war is prosecuted with a terrible vigour. Abraham Lincoln is now master of the situation, and has picked out able, tried officers to command the troops and lead the campaign. The Southern Army is expelled from Maryland and Pennsylvania,—Vicksburg and Port Hudson fall; but a frightful slaughter accompanies the repulse of the Southern

troops at Gettysburg; and, amid the horrors of war, let us pause here and take another view of President Lincoln.

The battle-field of Gettysburg is strewn with thousands of slaughtered troops, and a large piece of ground has been selected for a National Cemetery. Abraham Lincoln, with his whole Cabinet, is there, at the consecration of this great burial ground, and in presence of the Army and a vast concourse of people, he delivers the following beautiful Address.—“ Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that—all men are created equal. Now, we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war; we are met to dedicate a portion of it, as the final resting-place of those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

“ But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work that they have thus far so nobly carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom; and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Again, the year 1863, in which he has gathered up and put forth his strength with such terrible vigour, is nearly ended, and

he issues the following proclamation for a day of thanksgiving and prayer.—“The year that is drawing towards its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties which are so constantly enjoyed, that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful Providence of Almighty God.

“In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes served to invite and provoke the aggression of foreign states, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected, and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theatre of military conflict ; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

“The needful diversions of wealth and strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship. The axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal, as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield ; and the country, rejoicing in the consequences of augmented strength and vigour, is permitted to expect continuance of years, with large increase of freedom.

“No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand marked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

“It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice, by the whole American people.”

One more quotation, and I have done. Vicksburg has just fallen : but Mr. Lincoln has differed with General Grant regarding his method of making the attack, and has found fault with him upon that point. The following is his letter after the capture.

“ WASHINGTON, 13th July, 1863.

“ My Dear General.—I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now, as a grateful acknowledgement for the almost inestimable service you have done the country. I write to say a word further. When you reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do what you finally did,—march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below ; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo Pass expedition, and the like, could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join General Banks, and when you turned northwards, east of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgement, that you were right, and I was wrong. Your’s truly,

“ TO MAJOR-GENERAL GRANT.

“ A. LINCOLN.”

Is this not the apology of a great and noble soul ; and does it not shew, how every movement of that campaign was watched, and studied, and influenced, by his master eye?

Now follow the last struggles of the Confederates. Charleston is abandoned and burnt ; Richmond is abandoned. General Robert Lee surrenders his army to General Grant on the 9th April, 1865 : the rebellion has been put down with a strong hand, and shortly previous to the final overthrow, Abraham Lincoln has been re-elected President of the United States again, by a very large majority. He has then achieved his huge task ; he has subdued the rebellion—he has maintained the Union—he has established himself in the estimation and the confidence of his country. So, he is at the very loftiest pinnacle of eminence that can be reached in this world. He is monarch indeed of a

great people, and he holds their allegiance, not by birthright, nor by force of arms, but by chords which his own great soul and big heart have bound around theirs. Is it not a lofty pinnacle to have attained? And is it not truly horrible, that as we contemplate him there, his mighty spirit should be hurled from this life into eternity by the hand of a vain, drivelling, contemptible creature? “On the night of the 14th April, about the hour of half-past ten o’clock, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, was assassinated in his private box in Ford’s theatre, Washington, by a play-actor of the name of Booth: during a pause in the performance the assassin entered the box, hastily approached the President from behind, and discharged a pistol at his head: the bullet entered the back part of his head, and penetrated nearly through.”

I shall not dwell upon this atrocious act; our press and pulpits—the press and pulpits of the world, gave expression to the universal horror felt at it—I hasten to the object of this paper—to endeavour to form some estimate of the character of Abraham Lincoln.

From a very early age we have seen that Abraham Lincoln possessed a wonderful degree of patient labor and indomitable perseverance in accomplishing any purpose he may have formed, and this same wonderful strength of purpose distinguishes him throughout his whole life, in whatever situation he is placed. No difficulties, no dangers, however great, discourage or alarm him; but with calm, unruffled patience, and with enormous depth of energy and concentration does he pursue his purpose like a mighty fate, until it is accomplished, and that, too, in no half or incomplete manner, but accomplished in the fullest and amplest sense of the word. Sir Isaac Newton observed, “that the only difference he noticed between himself and other men was a habit of patient thought;” and this I believe is the distinguishing peculiarity found in all great thinkers. The great practical statesman must combine with this habit a power of patient laborious action,

as well as of prompt, vigorous, energetic action, and this combination Abraham Lincoln possessed in the highest degree; and if his abilities were not of a brilliant character, they had vast breadth and enormous power. His capacity, too, is of the largest order—he wields the President's baton of that great country, in the midst of a wild and wide revolution, with the same ease that he handled his axe and his rifle in the back woods of Indiana. His simplicity of character, and straightforward honesty are proverbial. But the feature which gave greatest strength to his character, indeed, which formed the rock to which it was anchored, was that trust in the Almighty, on which his soul seemed to rest;—there is a purity, a simplicity, a beauty, in those prayers he utters in every situation, which remind me of the Psalms of the sweet singer of Israel. They rise spontaneously from the very bottom of his big heart, and they have the pure spirit of prayer; they are the breathings of a grateful soul, in constant communion with its Maker. What a tower of strength is this! What a rock to lean upon!

There is one great regret attached to his loss, which is, that his reconstruction of the American Union and Constitution, with the curse of Slavery abolished from its institutions, might have been a most valuable lesson for future politicians. But his great spirit is gone, and the world will continue to gaze after it for ages, mourning its untimely departure, and cursing the wretch by whose hand it was hurried away.

My conclusion is,—that he was a truly great man—a man born to be a king among men. It may be that his character was roughly hewn, but it was hewn out of a mountain of granite, in lines of the noblest order. My belief is, that future history will accord to him one of the loftiest places among the sons of America,—indeed, among the great representative men of the world.

R Y

Liverpool, 8th September, 1865.

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